The Distinguished University?

H. Riley Jaschke, who received his B.A. from Rice magna cum laude, writes the third article in this series. A graduate of the Army's language school, he is an assistant in German. Mr. Jaschke is also a resident associate of Baker College. — Ed.

By H. RILEY JASCHKE
German Department

In last week's Sound-Off, Dr. Ben Josephson implied that Rice, as a presumably distinguished university, is, except for his one area of comment, "discriminating in its choice of students, requires high standards of performance, and attempts to provide an invigorating intellectual atmosphere which stimulates and emphasizes creative thinking."

With these thoughts in mind I should like to consider the more general question: why are Rice students and young alumni usually culturally and intellectually morons?

FOUR INTER-RELATED possibilities leading to this situation are 1) the overwrought work load of the students, 2) departmental and individual egotism on the part of faculty members, 3) inappropriate and out-of-place preoccupation with the by now trite "Rice public image," and 4) the simple factors of personal lethargy, cowardice, and conformity.

Many of us put much effort and money into supplying students with intellectual stimulation and exposure in the way of extra-curricular programming on both the college and university level, but to what avail if both enthusiasm and audience are lacking?

A FIRST impression conveys a lack of motivation on the part of students themselves, but effort and opportunity to know the students better reveals quite another picture.

Their time is often so consumed with required reading, lab reports, papers, and exams that for many it is a real impossibility to attend special programs, theater, or even social events.

It is not uncommon for a student to mention that he has not read a book purely for pleasure or curiosity in six months, a year, two years... At first it is only lack of time, then stifled intellectual curiosity—the result, another dull plodder along an assigned route, a sad development from the unquestionably bright and imaginative young person so carefully selected by the Admissions Committee.

HIGH STANDARDS must be maintained, but are there not many who could, if they care, profit significantly from a careful study of the ratio of time consumed to benefit-derived in course and lab planning and assignments? How unfortunate to confuse "hard" and "difficult" with "good" and "beneficial."

The problem of time and outlook becomes particularly acute when consciously or unconsciously work loads and exams are increased to demand more of the students' attention for a course. A snowballing of this shifting imbalance seems to have quickly produced a number of people who can not meet the strain or who are not rewarded justly in the grade system for their efforts.

ON ANOTHER BASIS, surely rare is the thinking humanist who does not realize the benefits of technological advancement in providing leisure for the pursuit of his career or

(Continued on Page 7)
the direct importance of the scientific method in thought; and surely, too, but few scientists can fail to be appalled by the need for intellectualism in their own group and others in a society which pitifully be-moans its lack of engineers and research scientists while it wastes thousands of these people designing a more streamline toaster or another automobile which will more dependably fall apart at exactly the time the monthly payments run out. Inter-discipline appreciation is then of highest importance.

IF THE TIME problem is solved, what then? A university must strive to present the widest possible range of knowledge, values, and experience. It is exactly this idea which is the basis of the academic freedom about which we boast proudly at Rice.

Surely this freedom is a reality, but how often is it exercised? "Public image" is a press agent's and politician's term. Why not leave it with the press agent and the politician?

I question seriously the over-influence of this term and its implications on faculty members and administrators in making decisions concerning the student body, interpretation and application of rules, personal conduct, and personal relations in and out of the university and with students.

WITH THE relationships of freedom to creativeness, of experience to knowledge and sound intellectualism are undeniably direct for most of us.

The importance of these factors to the students as well cannot be over-emphasized. The hesitancy in and lack of informal and social contact between students and faculty at Rice, which seems in a large part to result from this failure to accept and treat the students like the mature young men and women they can and must be, is truly a sad loss of inspiration and intellectual development for both.

WHEN WE TRY to blame our strange decisions and actions on "image," pressure from the social environment, and the necessity of "playing it by ear" rather than thinking in terms of sociology and conscience, I wonder if this is not a form of lethargy, cowardice, and unjustifiable conformity in disguise.

In any case, it is necessary and is it possible if such a thing as an invigorating intellectual atmosphere is to exist?

I THINK NOT, for this same lethargy, cowardice, and conformity emulated by students and their officers and again reflect upon the faculty in a never-ending circle that is the mediocrity that with all our money, buildings, programs, and tricks with semantics, we can not overthrow.

There is no doubt but what each of us must decide the answers to these questions for himself as an individual, but if decided with integrity, surely in an environment such as we have at Rice, which so realistically provides for and offers academic freedom, the results can hardly be based, or blamed, on other factors than our personal conscience, values, and energies.

With a bit of initiative, perhaps the number of cultural and intellectual morons encouraged at Rice can be decreased?